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Floridas Forests

Vol. 15, Issue 2 • Fall/Winter 2010

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Florida Forests is an official publication of the Florida Forestry Association
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Tallahassee, FL 32302-1696
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Florida Forests is published biannually by:

Naylor, LLC
5950 NW 1st Place
Gainesville, FL 32607
Phone: 800-369-6220
Fax: 352-332-3331
Web: www.naylor.com

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With the start of a new year and our wonderful 2010 Annual Meeting in Sandestin behind us, it is now time to move forward with an exciting new year for the Florida Forestry Association.

I am very proud to be able to represent our association as the new president. I have had the opportunity to see our current past president in action and have learned much from Mike and the wonderful job he did during his two-year term. It will be exciting to work with our Executive Committee and Jeff, our executive vice president, and the rest of our association staff in Tallahassee. We are very fortunate to have the best of the best serving our association.

We all in the forestry industry have felt the pressure that has come from our slow economy, some more than others. Hopefully we all will be looking at a brighter future in our Florida forest. As I serve you as president during the next two years, I will be open to any who would like to give me advice or address any concerns you may have. I believe the members who make up our association are the movers and shakers in the future of Florida’s forests. I feel the Lord has blessed me to be able to serve alongside of each one of our members.

God Bless,

Bryan J. Olmert

By Bryan J. Olmert

We are very fortunate to have the best of the best serving our association.
ATTENTION…
Members of the
Florida Forestry Association:

You have likely seen information over the last several months regarding the ballot initiative known as Amendment 4 (“Hometown Democracy”). In a nutshell, the initiative would impose a voter referendum requirement on ALL changes to local comprehensive plans statewide. This means that instead of having experienced local and county elected officials determining changes to comprehensive plans based on their planning staff’s recommendations—such as where to build homes, roads, hospitals, schools and other local businesses—voters would have to decide on every individual change to these plans, however minute and technical.

FFA is very concerned about the impact Amendment 4 would have on our property rights. It is also clear that Amendment 4 would lead to higher taxes to fund additional elections as well as the taxpayer-funded litigation that would ensue, should it pass. This is why we’ve joined forces with leading business groups, labor unions, citizen coalitions, healthcare groups, environmental leaders and planning organizations across Florida to oppose Amendment 4.

A citizen and business group, Citizens for Smarter Growth, has been formed to defeat the amendment with a “NO on 4” media campaign. Florida Forestry Association has joined the effort and will work within our membership to help raise the necessary funds to not only defeat this dangerous amendment, but to help defeat it so soundly it is less likely we will ever have to deal with it on the ballot again!

A $15 million media budget will be needed to help accomplish this task. Fundraising is targeted for grassroots groups as follows: General business—$4 million; Developers—$4 million; Professional Services—$1.5 million; Realtors—$2.5 million; Landowners—$3 million.

If you would like to help defeat Amendment 4 by making a contribution, please use the attached form to designate your level of commitment. Make your check payable to “Citizens for Smarter Growth,” and mail back to us by October 15. We will hand deliver the checks and let them know how much we support the “No On 4” effort.

Thank you again for helping us beat Amendment 4 on November 2nd. Remember vote “NO on 4,” and let others know they should vote NO as well.

Sincerely,

Jeff G. Doran
Executive Vice President
Help Send a Message!
Amendment 4 is not what we need!

Help defeat the Initiative
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Complete and mail back to:
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A river with a wild shoreline has become a rare thing in many parts of Florida. But at the Pettis Springs Farm south of Highway 90 in Greenville, the wild is still wild. The Aucilla River can’t be seen from the front or back porch. You have to make your way through dead snags, fallen logs and natural undergrowth before you find it. A distressed wood-board walkway snakes its way over the transition zone where water meets land.

A glimpse of the tranquil tea-colored water and its deep reflection of the massive bald cypress and hearty hardwoods that tower toward the blue sky stirs in me a sense of what pristine really means. Other than the larger than life gator that propels itself silently through the still waters, I also sense that on any given day you are likely to have the river all to yourself. Everything that is wild and wonderful about Florida, the sights and sounds of untouched wilderness, is before me.

Land Lovers

I knew I was in for an adventure when I sat down with Leonard and Susan Bembry on a hot August morning to learn about their life journey as landowners. Over a cold glass of well water at the couple’s kitchen table, I rediscovered
how completely honest and giving folks are who work the dirt.

With very little money and a whole lot of love and desire, Leonard and Susan called on their early experiences of growing up in the country by purchasing Pettis Springs Farm in 1975. With rural Hamilton County roots spanning four generations, it was the natural beauty of the land and the Aucilla River it borders that beckoned the Bembry’s to call this swatch of Madison County home. Thirty-five years of the couple’s 43-year marriage have been spent together there.

**Sweat Equity**

To hear the two describe the condition of the property when they first found it is the perfect picture of a forgotten relic of Florida’s celebrated past. Artesian spring baths, weathered summer cottages and a farm house that had not been lived in for nearly 20 years were all hidden behind dense woods, thick underbrush and a tangled web of weeds. But the rich heritage and unique history the property had to the community overshadowed its condition. They would soon discover “The Ox Jug,” a field where all the plow mules and oxen were stalled several generations back. From the beginning, the Bembry’s realized this land-owning adventure was going to be a journey, and perhaps a long one.

Leonard will tell you he is not a forester by trade, but one of heart.

With patience, insight and foresight, they worked hard to sculpt a jagged stone into a sacred jewel. Tranquil pastureland, shady oaks, pine plantations and fertile fields common of the grand ol’ South grace the place today.

“I could not believe the beauty of this place when we cleaned it up and began to develop it into a working tobacco and row crop farm,” said Leonard. Turning their attention to the soil, the 560-acre property became the base for a
full-time stewardship operation. Hard work became the mantra as Leonard worked nearly 70 hours a week farming the land. The bills got paid but with little left to do anything else. As Leonard shares, “We weren’t broke, we just didn’t have any money.”

**Resource Rich**

It was along about this same time in 1983 the couple made a decision to curtail the row crop way of life and start planting trees. Taking advantage of government incentives, Leonard enrolled some of the land in Conservation Reserve and other assistance programs. Today, mixed-age stands from 25 years down to seven-year-old planted pine shape the landscape on the Pettis Springs property.

Leonard will tell you he is not a forester by trade, but one of heart. As forest growers, he and Susan feel they have a rare privilege of caring for God’s resources and leaving them better than they found them. He harbors a holistic view of owning forestland, recognizing that the overall environmental health is dependent on all of its natural resources. Leonard lists lots of reasons for owning timberland—aesthetics, wildlife, peace and tranquility—all things he and his family can enjoy while the trees grow.

The couple’s call to stewardship now includes more than 900 acres on four separate farms spreading across three north Florida counties. Although very much your typical do-it-yourself type, when it’s time to harvest, he puts great trust in their forestry consultant to help protect the dogwoods, magnolias, live oaks, longleaf and other “favored” trees while finding the best price for trees going to market.

**A Firm Foundation**

In addition to its unique ecosystem, the Pettis Springs Farm celebrates one of Florida’s greatest natural resources: FAMILY. The three children, Lori, Kip and Missy, grew up there. With only two channels to watch on television, no child was left inside at the Bembry’s. They worked tobacco, built and repaired fences, serviced the livestock and made many memories of their own. As Leonard put it, “Our children grew up not scared of dirt and willing to work.”

Creating emotional connections to the land begins at a young age. Kip, their only son, constructed the wooden walkway and pier that provides a raised trail to the water when he was
16. He also staked his claim on the prized food plot, helped build his own deer stand and pleaded with dad not to plant pines there. Today, the property is affectionately labeled “Kip’s field.”

Trail rides on motorbikes across the countryside are an unforgettable chapter in the kids’ childhood journal. Leonard helped them purchase the dirt bikes with money earned working on the farm. They also fondly remember the hunts, secret fishing holes, and the treasured wide-open spaces that comforted them after a busy day at school. “The children learned to swim here almost as soon as they learned to walk,” Susan said. “The bass and bream were abundant. Catching fish wore them out, before the fish wore out,” she said with a chuckle.

**Strong Work Ethic**

When I asked the parents what was the greatest product of their family forests and farm, almost in unison they answered, “The land stewardship and work ethic of our children.”

“Working the land was a good teaching tool that has served them well,” Susan said.

Leonard espoused the same philosophy, taking a page from his own upbringing. “My daddy always said, ‘Boys, I may not teach you to like work, but when you leave home you will know what work is.’ Our kids and grandchildren know what work is,” he exclaimed.

Because of the kid’s deeply engrained love for the land, the Bembry’s do not worry about what will happen to the place when they are gone. Both feel strongly that “the land will respect anyone who works it and those who work it will respect the land.” All three children were involved in farm operations and all will be involved in farm ownership in the future. “Before it’s over, one of the grandkids will step up and own it all and without a mortgage,” Leonard quipped.

The couple truly cherishes the hearts of their children and grandchildren. Leisure time is celebrated on Cherry Lake where water skiing makes for great conversation around the campfire. Leonard still slalom skis and loves to exaggerate a fall to give the family a laugh or two.

Safeguarding this precious heritage for their children and grandchildren is one reason the Bembry’s participate in The County Alliance for Responsible Environmental Stewardship (CARES) program. This recognition program helps landowners implement measures to help protect and conserve water. The partnership brings together a diverse group of residents, farmers, scientists, environmental specialists and businesses to work toward a common goal—protecting the natural resources in the Suwannee River Basin for future generations. The sign outside the fence proudly
proclaims that Pettis Springs Farm continues to operate and maintain the best management practices that garnered the family the recognition in the first place.

**A Servant’s Heart**

Leonard’s childhood also weighs heavily on his adult life. He has never “gotten over” his experience serving as a page in the Florida Legislature in 1960 or his family lineage of public service. This desire to serve prompted him to run for the Florida House in 2008. He is currently completing his first term as a state representative of a sprawling 10-county area that winds from Chiefland to St. George Island. Nearly 50 years from his first visit to the state Capitol, he has returned to live his dream.

Everyone in the Bembry family devoted their hands, feet and hearts to help dad and granddad win the race. They all took vacation the week before the election and hit the campaign trail—all 10 counties—extra hard. Even the youngest grandson could be seen holding up “PaPa’s” signs and waving at passersby.

To Leonard Bembry, serving in the Legislature gets real personal. He votes what he feels!

---

**People Matter**

It did not take me long to learn that in Leonard Bembry, the people of District 10 have a champion for their concerns. The district’s 7,846 square miles represents a third of what’s left of rural Florida. Nine of the 10 counties he serves are financially constrained. Protecting small counties and preserving rural communities is the platform he won with and the one that will get him re-elected. “I’m their representative, not mine,” he added.

Reflecting on his own agriculture and business life lessons, he truly mirrors the lives of the people he represents. He uses his 40-plus years of business experience as the owner of University Homes in

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Tallahassee to bring common sense to the table in debates on taxes and spending. He was a “go-to guy” for the Association and landowners in the battle to reform the Greenbelt law this past session.

To Leonard Bembry, serving in the Legislature gets real personal. He votes what he feels! He almost choked up when he related the story of a veteran who called to thank him for sponsoring a bill that provided reduced entrance fees to Florida state parks. Susan attended the commemoration event with him at Stephen Foster Folk Cultural Center in White Springs on August 4th. “I think this is just one example of how people in his district realize how much he truly cares and has their interests at heart,” she said proudly.

Most recently, Rep. Bembry has been appointed to serve on the Gulf Oil Spill Economic Recovery Task Force. With more than 300 miles of coastline in his district, he is committed to helping impacted businesses and families recover from this disaster.

When I visited with him, he had just returned from meeting with the Florida Congressional Delegation on the nutrient standards to discourage the one-size-fits-all approach of the Environmental Protection Agency. The proposed standards facing Florida are expected to cost small counties more than $20 billion. In Rep. Bembry’s words, “that dog won’t hunt” in his district.

Now I am not a touchy-feely man, but I know a servant’s heart when I meet one. I also sense when politicians aspire to public service for the right reason. Leonard Bembry walks his talk. Folks like him are unique and have a bright future in whatever branch of Florida government they serve. Knowing how much Rep. Bembry wants to get “deeper in his ministry of helping people in rural north Florida,” I don’t think his elected office will stop at the Florida House of Representatives.

**Every Tree a Story**

As the morning ended, the visit had made a mark on me much like the majestic Live Oak I spotted when I first set foot on Pettis Springs Farm. The over-arching cathedral hardwood, with its arms folded securely over the rooftop, was more than shade on this sweltering 100-degree day.

The tree, with its long limbs spreading across the front lawn, is a landmark for this family and this farm. Its roots represent strength, safety, home and family—the things that really matter. In its bough is carved a real life lesson that the Bembry’s have experienced firsthand as landowners—bend with the wind and you will not break.

One last look at the Aucilla before leaving the farm put an exclamation point to this visit. It’s these non-conforming fragments of Florida land that bring me much comfort. It’s Association members like landowners Leonard and Susan Bembry who keep me passionate about my job. These are the places and the people living in harmony with each other and with nature. It doesn’t get much better than that!
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Loggers Benefit from Truck Weight Tolerance

Florida’s 10-percent weight tolerance increases the weight limit of trucks on non-Interstate highways from 80,000 to 88,000 pounds

By Alan Shelby
Director of Government Relations
Florida Forestry Association

The Florida Loggers Council first recommended a weight increase in 2007. Since that time, the association has been working with legislative leaders and building alliances with other trade groups to raise awareness of the inequities that exist in trucking weight laws between Florida and our neighboring states.

Rather than have a stand-alone bill, we were successful in amending our weight language into the large Department of Transportation (DOT) package, a calculated move that would prove beneficial later in the process. In May, the 2010 Florida Legislature gave final approval to HB 1271, sponsored by Rep. Mike Horner (R-Kissimmee), which contained our language increasing Florida’s truck weights to 88,000 pounds, adding a 10-percent tolerance to divisible loads on non-Interstate highways.

After three years of failed attempts and countless hours of meetings and negotiations with DOT officials and legislators, our weight increase language was on the governor’s desk. Unfortunately, not everyone agreed that heavier trucks rolling down the road was a good thing. Many state and national safety groups waged a media campaign urging Gov. Charlie Crist to veto the bill, saying that an increase in truck weight would make our roadways more hazardous for motorists and accelerate the degradation of our transportation infrastructure. In response, we helped organize our own media campaign with our allies to educate the public and the governor on the many benefits of higher truck weights, including: economic competitiveness with our neighboring states; reduced fuel consumption, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions; reduced traffic congestion and miles traveled, which also is a positive for the safety of our motoring public.

While Gov. Crist was not a huge fan of our idea, there were many

Florida loggers say...

“For the ability to haul an additional 4 tons per load, the $240 permit fee is a drop in the bucket.”

“With this new truck weight law, I feel like I have been given the biggest raise since I’ve been in the logging business.”

“Nobody in the logging business can say their membership in the Florida Forestry Association has not paid off.”

By Alan Shelby
Director of Government Relations
Florida Forestry Association
other transportation-related issues contained within HB 1271 that could not justify a veto. As a result, with little fanfare, Gov. Crist signed HB 1271 into law June 4.

Florida's New Weight Law

Effective July 1, Florida’s truck weights were increased by a 10-percent tolerance, enabling all freight haulers to transport “Divisible Loads” up to 88,000 pounds on designated non-Interstate highways.

In order to take advantage of the 10-percent “Divisible Load” tolerance (88,000 pounds), truckers must purchase a DOT permit for $240 per year/truck. To do so, simply complete a blanket permit application at a DOT permit office, apply by phone at (850) 410-5777, or apply online at www.fdotmaint.com/permit, where instructions for a “Divisible Load” permit also may be viewed.

An original permit and route map (2008 TTT Map 1) must be in the cab of each truck transporting a load with the 10-percent tolerance. The permit and route map may be moved from truck to truck, as long as it’s in the cab of the truck transporting the additional weight. “Divisible Load” permits will be issued for designated state highway routes only. However, in the absence of a county weight permit program, a valid state highway permit will be recognized for transport on non-posted county roads and bridges.

Remember...
- The maximum truck weight in Florida is still 80,000 pounds.
- The 10-percent weight permit is an optional weight “tolerance.”
- The 10-percent weight permits are valid only on designated state roads and non-posted county roads and bridges, and does not authorize transport on the Interstate Highway System.
- Any permitted truck in excess of the 10-percent tolerance (88,000 pounds) may be ticketed and required to off-load, back to the permitted weight.
- Any permitted truck transporting a 10-percent load over a posted road or bridge may be ticketed back to the posted weight.
Protection of State’s Water Quality During Forestry Operations Remains a High Priority

By Roy Lima
Watershed Specialist, Forest Hydrology Section
Florida Division of Forestry

Florida’s Silviculture Best Management Practices (BMPs) are an established set of practices designed to meet the necessary minimum standards for protecting and maintaining the state’s water quality along with certain wildlife habitat during silviculture (forestry) activities. When used as prescribed, they provide a balance between the use of forest resources and natural resource protection. Additionally, silviculture BMPs apply only to bona fide silviculture activities.

Protecting water quality during forestry operations remains a high priority for foresters, land managers, loggers and silviculture contractors, according to the 2009 statewide survey of forestry BMP implementation in Florida. The survey showed a 98 percent implementation rate.

Florida’s silviculture BMP Program is directed primarily at preventing nonpoint source pollution associated with forestry operations. The program was initiated with the development of the state’s first Silviculture BMP Manual in 1979. The Florida Division of Forestry (DOF) is the agency responsible for development, implementation and monitoring of silviculture BMPs throughout the state.

Two professionally trained BMP foresters are strategically located in Florida to respond to any BMP concerns, and are available to conduct on-site BMP courtesy checks as needed. BMP forester Cathy Hardin is located at the Division’s Bonifay Forestry Station and is responsible for implementation training and site inspections throughout the panhandle from Escambia County to Madison/Taylor County. BMP forester Robin Holland is located at the Sharpes Ferry Office in Ocala and covers northeast Florida from Marion County north to Nassau County, as well as south Florida.

Since 1981, the Division has monitored forestry operations for BMP implementation by conducting biennial implementation surveys, statewide. Implementation levels in surveys over the years illustrate a strong commitment on the part of Florida’s forestry community to protect the state’s natural water resources (Figure 1).

Implementation of silviculture BMPs in Florida is primarily done under an educational format, designed to transfer BMP technology to forest practitioners through workshops and field demonstrations. The implementation program is ongoing, with workshops routinely provided upon request, or as deemed necessary based on survey results. Currently, DOF personnel

![Figure 1. BMP Implementation by Survey Year](image-url)
conducted 25 to 30 workshops annually, involving more than 750 participants per year. In addition, the DOF provides BMP training directly to loggers through the Florida Forestry Association’s Master Logger Program and through the Southeastern Wood Producers Association. To date, approximately 494 loggers have become Master Loggers, of which 35 have obtained Master Logger Plus status. A total of 758 Master Loggers have completed an additional six-hour BMP Continuing Education Course.

The 2009 BMP Implementation Survey evaluated 4,127 practices on 185 sites in 37 Florida counties. Of the 185 sites evaluated, 47 were on private non-industrial forestland, 122 were found on industrial land and 16 occurred on public lands (Figure 2).

The highest overall implementation level among land ownerships was on industry lands at 98.9 percent, with private non-industrial lands at 97.8 percent and public ownerships at 97.4 percent.

The overall implementation rate for individual sites ranged from 79 percent to 100 percent with an average of 98.1 percent. One hundred and forty-eight of the 185 survey sites were found in full implementation (100 percent) of all applicable BMPs. Thirty sites scored an overall compliance of 90-99 percent and six sites scored between 80-89 percent. One site scored below 80 percent.

The 2009 survey showed a continuing high implementation rate with silviculture BMPs in Florida. This is attributed to the distribution of more than 55,000 Silviculture BMP Manuals since 1993 to the cooperative educational outreach to the forestry community through DOF workshops and demonstrations, and to the quality of forest landowners, loggers and professional foresters who make up the state’s forestry community.

**NOTE:** The 2009 Implementation Survey Report is a detailed report of compliance levels in all 14 BMP categories and is available from the Division of Forestry by phone (850) 414-9934 or by e-mail contact: limar@doacs.state.fl.us.
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Florida Forests Fall/Winter 2010
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